

There seems to be little doubt, as the authors suggest, that this bird appears to be associated with the distribution of *Salvadora persica*.

BOMBAY NATURAL HISTORY SOCIETY,

BOMBAY.

C. McCANN.

May 27, 1937.

XIII.—THE SOUTHERN INDIAN ROLLER OR BLUE JAY
[*CORACIAS BENGHALENSIS INDICA* (LINN.)]
KILLING A SMALL SNAKE.

Baker and Inglis in *The Birds of Southern India* refer to the Roller killing and eating mice and small reptiles and in the *Journal of the Society*, No. xxxix, p. 179 there is an interesting note regarding this bird killing and eating a large scorpion.

While out on the 3rd December this year I noticed a Roller suddenly fly up from an aloe hedge with a small live snake 8 or 9 inches in length in its beak. The snake was held just behind the head and was twisting about trying to get a grip on some portion of the bird. The Roller was uttering its harsh cry all the while and although the snake's struggles almost caused it to release its hold it eventually made for a palmyrah palm where it is presumed it killed the snake.

I have seen a Crow-Pheasant sitting on a rail along the railway track engaged in killing a large black scorpion and it is presumed it was going to eat it as I did not see the whole operation due to the bird becoming alarmed and flying away with the scorpion in its beak.

TANJORE,

February 9, 1937.

C. H. BIDDULPH.

XIV. BREEDING OF THE LITTLE INDIAN NIGHTJAR
(*CAPRIMULGUS ASIATICUS ASIATICUS*) IN
THE CHINGLEPUT DISTRICT.

(With a plate).

I see in the report of the 'Vernay Ornithological Survey of the Eastern Ghats' (vol. xxxviii, No. 1, August 1935, p. 39) that 'nothing has been recorded about the breeding season' of the Little Indian Nightjar, *Caprimulgus asiaticus asiaticus* in the Presidency of Madras. It may therefore be of interest to record that on July 11th, 1937, my husband and I disturbed a nightjar in an exposed spot in the scrub jungle near the foot of the Tambaram Hills (100-200 ft.), and, after some search, discovered a single egg, on

the ground among the stones and rocks. It was brownish-pink much mottled with darker red, and somewhat lighter than the surrounding stones. We were not able to return to this place until August 1st; we then found that the egg had disappeared from the spot where we had seen it on July 11th, but after careful search we found the nightjar some yards lower down the hillside, crouched low with its chin on the rump of the chick. Not even when we bent over them to examine them did either move; in going up the hill to the place where we had previously seen the egg, we must almost have trodden on them, but not the slightest movement had attracted our attention.

On August 5th we went again, hoping to photograph the two, but they had again moved, and while we were searching among the stones, from somewhere close behind us the nightjar flew up and past us, followed immediately by the young one; they took shelter among the rocks and thorny bushes of the hillside, where we could not find them.

We believe this nightjar to be *Caprimulgus asiaticus asiaticus*; the bird with the 'tuk tuk tuk tukeroo' call is abundant in the scrub jungle of this district (16 miles S.W. of Madras City) as in our garden, and has been seen and heard by us in every month of the year, during the five years in which we have been resident here; and as we not infrequently flush nightjars under the bushes in the day time, we have been able to compare them with the descriptions in *Birds of Southern India* by Baker and Inglis, and in Whistler, and there seems little doubt that these birds are *C. a. asiaticus*.

The moving of the nesting position has also been observed by us in what we believe to be *C. indicus indicus*. On April 28th 1935, we discovered a nightjar and two eggs among the rocks and stones on a hillside on the Ootacamund Downs (about 8,000 ft.); when revisiting the place a few days later, we found that the eggs had been moved several feet, and on May 11th, we found the young birds in still another spot. An interesting feature was the difference in the behaviour of the parent bird before and after the hatching of the young. Each time when disturbed by us when sitting on the eggs, the bird flew straight up and swiftly away to a considerable distance; but after the chicks were hatched it flew slowly along the ground, flapping and dragging a wing as though wounded, and settled at only a short distance from its young.

We found a nightjar and two young on the Bikkepatti Ridge (about 6,500 ft.) on the N.W. edge of the Nilgiris on May 5th 1932; this we also believe to be *C. i. indicus*. In this case also, the parent bird tried to distract our attention by much flapping along the ground. The two chicks kept their eyes tightly shut, and were so motionless and matched the stony ground so completely, that in our search for them we were actually looking at them for some time without realising their presence.

I enclose a photograph we took of the Ootacamund nightjar chicks. It will be seen in the photograph that the feathers where the chick is in contact with the ground when squatting are fluffy.



Chicks of the Common Indian Nightjar (*Caprimulgus asiaticus*).

Photo by:

Author